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## Schools head clarifies cuts to adult ed

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OROVILLE — Although a group of people addressing Oroville Union High School District trustees Wednesday raised alarms that a proposed \$740,000 budget cut would close down Oroville Adult Education, the district superintendent explained otherwise.

Adult ed is one of 18 cuts District Superintendent Oran Roberts submitted recently to reduce the district's budget by \$1.3 million for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years. The list of cuts is the first round, set for continued discussion and possible adjustment.

Continued loss of revenue from the state and declining enrollment are forcing the high school district to pare down its budget, a situation schools face statewide.

Several people who attend Oroville Adult Education stood before the board, describing what the program means to them.

Some voiced concern any reduction would ruin the program; others said the amount proposed to reduce adult ed funding was disproportionate in comparison to other programs.

Teacher Zane Libert said he learned of the recommendation in the newspaper, and that the amount proposed is "hard to swallow."

"Whenever funds are reduced, it reduces the quality

of education," Libert added.

He acknowledged the position the district and all schools are in, but also asked the trustees to find another way.

"Schools are taking a hit, but every time you cut adult education, you're hurting the community ..." Libert said. "We have so much that's good there."

Libert pointed out many

of the people in the program are trying to make a better life for themselves by increasing their skills and gaining opportunities to find better jobs.

Adult ed student Tim Reilly said he got into the program five years ago, and it has turned his life around. He will get his high school equivalency diploma this month.

Reilly and others indicated closing the program would make it too expensive for people like himself, and that attending Butte College or Chico State University aren't options.

"It's because of Oroville Adult Education that I'm not out there running amok," he said.

A woman spoke about how going to adult ed classes provided an outlet for her after the death of her husband 16 months ago.

Roberts later explained to the board and the public he is not recommending closing the school.

He said about \$150,000 of the proposed cut reflects money that will be saved by moving adult ed to the district's facility on Mitchell Avenue. The program

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currently leases space at Prospect High School.

The bulk of the proposed cut to the program is through the elimination of an administrator and a few secretaries and para-educators.

"We are not trying to close adult ed," Roberts said. "We're trying to keep the essential core programs."

He said the program will still provide classes in English as a second language, adult literacy, General Equivalency Diploma — or GED — and technical programs, plus fee-based classes "that pay for themselves."

"We' hope to still have an effective adult education program, maintaining quality with the resources we have," Roberts said.

Roberts elaborated further on other recommended cuts. The list includes elimination of stipends to the board, particularly for attending conferences, and the cost of health benefits for new and returning board members.

It also includes elimination of the Las Plumas High School Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

Roberts said the district received a warning from the Navy that the enrollment in the program needs to go up.

Two instructors have offered to reduce their contracted time, and the district is also looking at other options in staffing.

Prospect High School's day care program is also recommended among the cuts. Currently, four children attend. The program also provides

parenting classes to the students. The district is also considering other options and is dialoguing with another agency to fund the program.

Roberts said the district is trying to hold off on cutting the day care until 2011-12.

Suggested cuts of two high school counselors need to be negotiated.


The total recommendations would save the district \$858,000 for the next school year, and nearly \$442,000 for 2011-12.

The trustees are expected to approve a budget by the end of this month.

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